

Robina Bhatti

Final Report

Project Title: Everyday Life of AfPak

Fellowship Type: Post-doctoral Short-term for five-months

Everyday life of AfPak examines the discourses of war on terror that have securitized lives everywhere. In undertaking this research my first goal is to go beyond the grand narratives of geo-politics, economics and strategy (military) responsible for Pak-American troubled relations. Secondly, I focus on the lived experiences and livelihoods of the average person impacted by policies based on these grand strategies and narratives. The goal is to understand AfPak policy in the shadow of the war on terror, specifically its impact on everyday lives of Pakistanis. My third goal is to interrogate resistance to AfPak by ordinary people as everyday life constitutes and is constituted by bodies, homes, environments, states and global policies.

Fieldwork in Pakistan interrogated the discursive production and transformation of President Obama's Pakistan-Afghanistan policy referred to as AfPak. It particularly examined the imperial debris of this policy visible in the scarring of bodies, places, economies and environments in everyday life in Pakistan. I began work on this project July 2010 in Karachi studying the displacement of people from Northern Pakistan related to the 'war on terror'. I continued with field work in Islamabad from October 2010 to April 2011. AIPS funding facilitated research from May through July 2011 and again in June to August 2012.

The first part of the project focused on hegemonic discourse on global terrorism and its particular enactment in Pakistan via AfPak. The intent was to examine identities constructed and practices legitimized by AfPak policy. Enacting this policy necessitates a high degree of political and social consensus as an undeclared war in Pakistan would not be possible without it. Six months in Islamabad from October 2010 to April 2011 permitted me to follow official and unofficial conversations with regard to Pakistan's unsustainable, insecure and ecologically destructive entanglement in the ongoing, undeclared war in Northern Pakistan. In part this involved a review of knowledge production by Pakistani academics, researchers at various Universities, Think Tanks, Policy Institutes, NGOs, journalists and activists. It also meant sitting in on innumerable relevant seminars, colloquiums, round tables, and talks in Islamabad. Particularly useful for this purpose were the frequent workshops held at five-star hotels by NGOs active in Northern Pakistan. Narratives of the Pakistani state were included in this review and illustrate how security discourses have trumped other available political discourses. This was also evident in the everyday life of this research project, given security restrictions packaged with funding support that impoverish Pakistan Studies.

Media reports of the assassinations of two Federal Ministers by Taliban organizations in early 2011, the Raymond Davis and Abbottabad affairs, frequent drone attacks, NATO attacks on Pakistani army and politics of NATO supply routes provided clues of resistance to AfPak within 'official' circles. In this regard, Parliamentary proceedings were also insightful as was an in-depth interview with a female MNA (member of national assembly) who is also an outspoken religious minority. Political humor provided clues where official accounts failed in explicating politics. I traced five years-worth of political cartoons published in leading newspapers (Urdu and English) related to United States and Pakistan's relationship. Numerous well established

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Pakistani popular blogs were instructive in this regard. The data gathered enabled me to understand how particular security discourses have become common knowledge. Further, scrutinizing the language of AfPak, its performances and practices facilitated an understanding of how AfPak has been sustained and to what effect.

Beyond the construction of a hegemonic discourse that has justified an undeclared war, a second but core part of the project anchored research in the lives, bodies, environments and economies of everyday people. For this purpose, I conducted interviews with a wide range of people in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore and surrounding areas of these cities. This allowed me to focus on the everyday aspect of my project and the processes related to AfPak policies that have saturated the subsoil of people's lives in Pakistan. I maintained a gender balance with structured interviews and whenever possible I looked for residents of Northern Pakistan, the area most impacted by AfPak. A major portion of this work was completed by April 2011 prior to the AIPS grant. But AIPS enabled continuation of work on 'Everyday Life of AfPak' during May – July 2011 and during Summer 2012. These interviews provide the most inclusive frame for thinking about AfPak and everyday life in Pakistan.

The last part of this project accounts for strategies of survival as well as active resistance to imperial policies by people in various walks of life. It is at this stage that AIPS grant proved crucial. It enabled several video interviews with 11 residents of FATA, a number of people from rural areas around Lahore and religious minorities targeted by extremists. I was able to conduct extensive interviews with professionals, attorneys and activists that are publicly protesting United States war in Pakistan. I reviewed case files for on-going litigation against the Government of Pakistan filed in Lahore High Court on behalf of Pakistani citizens abducted and detained at Bagram. In addition, I reviewed the documentation for the case filed in Peshawar High Court on behalf of families of drone victims. These documents made it possible to view AfPak as lived and experienced in everyday life in Pakistan.

Relevance for Pakistan Studies: Introducing the relevance of everyday Pakistani lives into research and analysis on hegemonic discourses such as the war on terror shifts attention away from narratives constructed from imperial vantage points, interests and perspectives. It shows that everyday lives are not incidental or cut off from the world and matters of the state. Pakistan Studies is enriched by exploring the enactment of US and Pakistani foreign policies on bodies, homes, environments of ordinary people. These spaces and social relations of everyday life question and counter accepted narratives of geopolitics, hegemonic understandings of strategic games and end games.

During the length of the project, I was affiliated with five institutions, but for the duration of AIPS grant, I retained affiliation with the Centre for Excellence in Gender Studies, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad and Pakistan Studies Centre University of Punjab, Lahore. I was able to contribute to academic life in Islamabad by lecturing at Fatima, Jinnah Women's University in May 2011. In June through July, I presented a series of four lectures for graduate students at the Center for Excellence in Gender Studies at Quaid-e-Azam University. These five lectures addressed issues of gender and global political economy, particularly development. In addition, I was able to present a portion of my ongoing research on the ecological impact of

AfPak to the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in Islamabad. The talk was entitled 'Boot, Foot and Hoof Prints: Pakistan's Environmental and Imperial Debris'.

In June through August 2012, my contributions were geared to working with several PhD students at Punjab University's Pakistan Studies Centre. Lastly, in August 2012 I was able to deliver a talk on research methods and field work at the FATA Research Center in Islamabad. I committed to two scholarly peer-review articles as the final outcome of this research project. Earlier research put me in a good position to draft the first article on dominant discourses of security tentatively entitled '*Pakistan in the shadow of AfPak*'. This is now being revised in view of data collected with AIPS support. The interviews with residents of FATA and the materials on litigation concerning Pakistani citizens detained at Bagram as well as drone victim families will lead to a second article on '*Everyday Life of AfPak*'. AIPS funding helped me to go beyond research for these two articles and I thank AIPS for its support.